

1. (Amended) A method for obtaining consumer preferences for a product/service category over a communications network from a plurality of consumers, comprising the steps of:

A2 selecting one or more product/service criteria for said product/service category and at least one of said selected product/service criteria as a ranking parameter by a consumer;

searching a database connected to said network for products or services in said product/service category based on said selected product/service criteria;

displaying a list of products or services satisfying said selected product/service criteria on a processing device associated with said consumer, said list being ordered in accordance with said ranking parameter; and

storing said selected product/service criteria and said ranking parameter in said database, thereby providing market research data of consumer preferences from said consumer interested in said product/service category.

2. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of searching searches said database for products or services that matches closest to said selected product/service criteria.

3. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of entering one or more new product/service criteria by said consumer if it is determined that no product or service in said database satisfies said selected product/service criteria; and wherein the step of searching searches said product database for products or services in said product/service category based on said new product/service criteria.

4. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

selecting one or more products or services from said list by said consumer;

retrieving product/service information for said selected products or services from said database;

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displaying product/service information of said selected products or services on said processing device; and

storing said selected products or services in said database as market research data of consumer preferences.

5. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of selecting one or more product/service criteria includes the steps of:

displaying a list of product/service criteria for selection by said consumer; and

selecting a range for each product/service criteria selected by said consumer.

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8. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

selecting additional product/service criteria by said consumer;

searching said database for products or services in said product/service category based on said selected product/service criteria and said additional product/service criteria;

displaying a list of products or services related to said selected product/service criteria and said additional product/service criteria on said processing device, said list being ordered in accordance with said ranking parameter; and

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storing said additional criteria in said databases as market research data of consumer preferences.

9. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said database includes advertisements and further comprising the step of:

selecting an advertisement from said database in accordance with said selected product/service criteria; and

displaying said advertisement along with said list on said processing device.

10. (Amended) The method of claim 9, wherein said database comprises a product database having product/service information, a marketing database having consumer preferences, and an advertisement database having advertisements; and wherein the step of searching searches said product database for products or services in said product/service category based on said selected product/service criteria; wherein the step

of storing stores said selected product/service criteria and said ranking parameter in said marketing database as market research data of consumer preferences; and wherein the step of selecting the advertisement selects advertisement from said advertisement database in accordance with said selected product/service criteria.

11. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of generating a report indicating a consumer trend from said market research data of consumer preferences in said database for a product/service category selected by an operator.

13. (Amended) A method for targeting advertisement over a communications network, comprising the steps of:

selecting one or more product/service criteria for a product/service category and at least one of said selected product/service criteria as a ranking parameter by a consumer;

searching a product database connected to said network for products or services in said product/service category based on said selected product/service criteria and an advertisement database connected to said network for one or more advertisement based on said selected product/service criteria;

displaying said advertisement and a list of products or services satisfying said selected product/service criteria on a processing device associated with said consumer, said list being ordered in accordance with said ranking parameter; and

storing said selected product/service criteria and said ranking parameter, thereby providing market research data of consumer preferences from said consumer interested in said product/service category.

15. (Amended) A system for acquiring and storing consumer preferences for a product/service category over a communications network from a plurality of consumers, comprising:

a plurality of processing devices connected to said network, each processing device being associated with a consumer, and having an input device for selecting one or

more product/service criteria for said product/service category and at least one of said selected product/service criteria as a ranking parameter by said consumer;

a database connected to said network; and

a server for receiving said selected product/service criteria and said ranking parameter from a processing device associated with said consumer over said network, for searching said database for products or services in said product/service category and advertisements based on said selected product/service criteria, for transmitting advertisements and a list of products and services satisfying said selected product/service criteria to said processing device over said network, said list being ordered in accordance with said ranking parameter, for storing said selected product/service criteria and said ranking parameter in said database, thereby providing market research data of consumer preferences from said consumer interested in said product/service category; and

wherein said computer associated with said consumer is operable to display said list and said advertisements to said consumer.

16. (Amended) The system of claim 15, wherein said server is operable to generate one or more new product/service criteria based on inputs from said consumer if it is determined that no product or service in said database satisfies said selected product/service criteria; and wherein said server is operable to search said database based on said new product/service criteria.

18. (Amended) The system of claim 15, wherein said server is operable to search said database for product/service information related to one or more products or services selected by said consumer from said list and operable to store said selected products or services in said database as market research data of consumer preferences; and wherein said processing device is operable to display said product/service information to said consumer.